



Community Workshop Summary/Questions/Report-Out:

Single-Family Home & Tree Regulation Updates

Background

On November 18, 2015, the City held a Community Outreach Workshop for the Single-Family Home & Tree Regulation Updates project at Belmont City Hall. Over a 140 members of the Belmont community came to share their perspectives on the potential regulation updates.

After a brief presentation on the update purpose and process, attendees participated in small group discussion to address topic areas using specific questions related to single family house size, parking, house design & neighborhood “fit”, secondary dwelling units, trees, and improving the Single Family Design Review process. The small groups then reported their thoughts and suggestions for the potential regulation updates to the larger group. The groups’ responses were aggregated by topic area, and are provided below.

Group Responses

1. ***Single Family House Size.*** *Should the City increase the maximum allowable house size, up to say 5,000 sq. ft., which is considerably less than neighboring communities that do have a floor area maximum (most do not)? Should adjustments to this maximum be made downward based on lot size and slope? Alternately, should a sliding scale be considered where the maximum allowable house size is different for lots larger than 10,000 sq. ft. or 20,000 sq. ft.?*

- Don't want large homes; want smaller homes
- Okay to increase home size to 5,000 sq. ft., with a sliding scale based on lot size
- Not adequate data to make informed decision
- FAR table needs to be examined
- Impact of potential larger homes unknown; how many homes?
- Impact on population unknown
- Set standards according to zoning standards. Work standards into the General Plan update.
- Add more flexibility for unusual cases
- Neighbor input should be considered if there will be a significant impact
- Allow home size to 5,000 sq. ft. on a case by case basis
- Base maximum home size on lot size
- Demand for larger homes could come from developers (an area of concern)
- Some were reluctant to raise maximum floor area above the current maximum
- Sliding scale could be appropriate, especially for very large lots
- Use a fair floor area ratio for larger lots
- No cap, but utilize sliding scale, daylight plane and building envelope plane
- Don't care what other cities are doing, but if they have a good idea, copy



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- There should be no maximum, but tie to sliding scale of FAR
- Fit home to lot and height and setbacks, add floor area underground if needed
- Current floor area cap is arbitrary
- Don't count garage in floor area number
- Make maximum 5,000 sq. ft., not counting garage
- Support floor area cap of 5,000 sq. ft., with max footprint and sliding scale
- The current floor area limit is arbitrary
- Need to address views, encroaching on neighbors, slope, and setbacks
- Remove cap
- Increased house size encourages more cars. Concern regarding traffic.
- Can support 5,000 sq. ft., tie to lot size, sliding scale
- Consider building down (in underfloor areas)
- Base on footprint, not floor area
- 5,000 sq. ft. could be OK
- Encourage variability of house to lot; base maximum home size on slope and footprint
- Need to address impacts to adjacent neighbors views and privacy
- Setbacks should be adequate to address home size
- Topography and architectural design should be adequate to address home size
- No cap is necessary; scale home to lot size and slope

2. ***House Design and Neighborhood "Fit".*** *Should there be additional standards for larger homes with tall walls and vaulted roofs, for example, and additions, particularly on the second floor, to prevent homes from looking too bulky? Should some standards be relaxed to allow for limited projections into yards and continuation of existing nonconforming setbacks?*

- Yes, for additional standards for setbacks
- Allow extension of non-conforming setbacks, but only towards the back
- OK with existing
- Some didn't like projections into yards
- Consider a view ordinance/sunshine ordinance
- Don't support flexibility for going up
- Concern is height, bulk, and volume
- Allow uniqueness
- Base on San Carlos's regulations
- Yes on extensions of nonconforming setbacks, and grandfather existing setbacks
- Base on neighborhood standards



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- Relax standards
- Extend nonconforming setbacks
- OK if doesn't change exterior
- Desire that homes fit in neighborhood
- Concerns regarding bulk and enforcement
- Concern regarding overregulation
- Okay as long as following line of house, but not OK for second story (step it back)

3. **Parking.** *What can the City do to make sure there is adequate parking? Allow for carports to meet the requirement of a "covered" space? Adjust the parking requirements so they are based on the number of bedrooms and on the number of cars most people usually own? Do these ideas make sense? What else should be done?*

- Most in an individual group wanted garages, one member was okay with carports
- Need more data. More residents, four or more bedrooms - require more parking
- Should require two enclosed spaces, and two uncovered parking spaces for new homes
- Need exception for older homes with one car garage
- Should require four spaces and no carports; over four bedrooms should require an upgrade
- Concern regarding people parking in street; address this concern as opposed to number of bedrooms requiring a number of parking spots
- Against carports
- Parking should be based on lot size
- Same size garage unreasonable based on home size, 20x20 is too large for smaller homes and in some areas
- Some don't support the need for covered parking
- Do not penalize for adding rooms by requiring more parking
- Don't care where people park, as long as in legal space
- Menlo Park has parking permit process – Belmont should consider it
- Use average number of cars people own as opposed to number of bedrooms
- Current regulations are excessive. Base parking on the square footage of the house
- Okay to count carport as covered parking
- Second units should trigger more required parking
- All parking should count regardless of type
- Get rid of parking regulations. People don't park in their garage
- Don't tie parking requirements to the number of bedrooms in a home
- Unfair that houses with one-car garages are penalized



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- Look at total number of parking spaces, count all legal parking spaces for the home
 - Carports should count as covered parking and should be encouraged
 - Covered parking is not necessary as long as there is a legal uncovered space
4. **Trees.** *How can the City provide better protection for its most valuable trees – its native, healthy, safe, and large diameter trees? Should the list of protected trees be limited to Heritage Trees (Coast Live Oak, Valley Oak, Redwood, Madrone, Bay Laurel and Buckeye) and Large Diameter Trees? Should the city have standards that make it easier to remove non-native, invasive trees, dead and dying trees, trees that are fire hazards, and trees that are unsafe? What else should be done?*
- Current law treats maintenance tree removal and development tree removal differently; they should be treated the same
 - Should be able to get rid of diseased trees
 - General consensus regarding the preference for protecting native trees
 - Protect native trees
 - Don't charge for removal of dead trees
 - Address view and solar impacts in tree regulations
 - Current regulations are too strict
 - There should be no fee to thin forest to address light to property
 - Protect native trees at 24" diameter at 4.5 feet above ground level
 - Make the ordinance simpler
 - City should replace city trees that are removed
 - 1:1 replacement should be the standard, not 3:1
 - Allow removal of dead or diseased trees with no fees
 - Don't limit protected trees to just heritage trees
 - Agree with other comments. Better turnaround time
 - People should engage neighbors more if a tree needs to be removed
5. **Second Units.** *In order to comply with State law, Conditional Use Permits will only be required if the lot is less than 5,000 square feet in size. Do you support reducing the maximum size of a second unit (from today's limit of 1,200 sq. ft. to 1,000 sq. ft.) but allowing it to be a larger percentage of the existing home (up to say 40%)?*
- 640 sq. ft. second unit should be the maximum
 - OK with 1,000 sq. ft. second units
 - Base second unit size on lot size
 - Some want 670 sq. ft. second units, others are okay with 1000 sq. ft. second units



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- Base second unit size on total floor area allowed for lot
- If added within existing envelope, the size of the second unit shouldn't matter
- Size of second unit should be indexed to the maximum floor area ratio for the lot
- There should be no maximum size second unit; use a sliding scale based on lot size and slope
- Require a CUP for second units on lots that are less than 5,000 sq. ft.
- Don't need to reduce maximum size second unit
- There should be no cap on second unit size

6. **Single Family Design Review – Improving the Process.** *The City wants to create fair, equitable and predictable review procedures that also recognize the differences in impacts among projects. One way to do this is with a “tiering” system, allowing small scale, ground-floor projects to be reviewed at the staff level (Tier 1) but require notice and Zoning Administrator review for larger ground floor additions and small upper-floor additions (Tier 2), and Planning Commission review of new homes and larger additions (Tier 3). Objective criteria would be set so everyone would know what the rules are. Neighborhood input will be welcomed, and notice required for any addition or new construction of more 400 square feet. Do you support this tiering concept? Are there ways you would refine it to make it more fair?*

- Planning Commission should retain jurisdiction over larger projects
- Need flexibility to address neighborhood character
- The current process is too hard, and the fees are too high
- Too much red tape
- Review of changes should be data driven, using Geographical Information Systems
- Process is currently painful
- Need predictability
- The process shouldn't take so long
- In favor of the tiered approach
- Abolish design review
- Produce standards and make people comply
- In favor of tiered review
- Neighbor notification
- Current process cumbersome
- In favor of tiered review
- Support tiered review
- Recommend increasing sq. ft. of tier 1, and decreasing fees for tier 2
- Support tiered approach